



We Fund Dependency

By [John Stossel](#) - October 3, 2012

"There are no jobs!" That is what people told me outside a government "jobs center" in New York City.

To check this out, I sent four researchers around the area. They quickly found 40 job openings. Twenty-four were entry-level positions. One restaurant owner told me he would hire 12 people if workers would just apply.

It made me wonder what my government does in buildings called "job centers." So I asked a college intern, Zoelle Mallenbaum, to find out. Here's what she found:

"First I went to the Manhattan Jobs Center and asked, 'Can I get help finding a job?' They told me they don't do that. 'We sign people up for food stamps.' I tried another jobs center. They told me to enroll for unemployment benefits."

So the "jobs" centers help people get handouts. Neither center suggested people try the 40 job openings in the neighborhood.

My intern persisted:

"I explained that I didn't want handouts; I wanted a job. I was told to go to 'WorkForce1,' a New York City program. At WorkForce1, the receptionist told me that she couldn't help me since I didn't have a college degree. She directed me to another center in Harlem. In Harlem, I was told that before I could get help, I had to come back for an 8:30 a.m. 'training session.'"

Our government helps you apply for handouts immediately, but forces you through a maze if you want to work.

"WorkForce1's website says to arrive 30 minutes early, so I did," Zoelle said. "A security guard told me the building was closed. At 9:15, Workforce1 directed 30 of us into a room where we were told that WorkForce1 directs candidates to jobs and provides a resource room with 'free' phone, fax and job listings and helps people apply for unemployment insurance and disability handouts. This seemed like the only part of the presentation when people took notes."

"One lady told me that she comes to WorkForce1 because it helps her collect unemployment. One asked another, 'What do you want to do?' The second laughed, 'I want to collect!' One told me, 'I've been coming here 17 months; this place is a waste of time.'

"Finally, I met with an 'adviser.' She told me I lacked experience. I know this. I asked for any job she thought I was qualified for, and she scheduled an interview at Pret, a food chain that trains employees. At Pret, I learned that my 'interview' was just a weekly open house, publicized on the company's website. Anyone could walk in and apply. Workforce1 offered no advantage. Despite my 'scheduled interview,' I waited 90 minutes before meeting a manager. He told me that WorkForce1 had 'wasted my time, as they always do.' He said, 'They never call, never ask questions.' He prefers to hire people who seek out jobs on their own, like those who see Pret ads on Craigslist."

My intern learned a lot from this experience. Here are her conclusions:

--It's easier to get welfare than to work.

--The government would rather sign me up for welfare than help me find work.

--America has taxpayer-funded bureaucracies that encourage people to be dependent. They incentivize people to take "free stuff," not to take initiative.

--It was easier to find job openings on my own. The private market for jobs works better than government "job centers."

Yet now New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg wants to expand Workforce1, claiming that it helps people "find real opportunities." I bet he never sends people in to find out whether they really do.

Once politicians figured out that welfare creates dependency and hurts poor people, they (logically) assumed that employment services and job training would help. Job training *does* help -- when employers do it. But government does everything badly.

GeorgiaWork\$, a state program in that state, provided such poor training that only 14 percent of trainees were hired.

The Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) operated more like a commercial for government handouts. It launched door-to-door food stamp recruiting campaigns, and gave people free rides to welfare offices.

America now has 47 federal jobs programs. They fail. Yet politicians want more. They always want more.

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